

ABSTRACT

Phase I and II archaeological investigations were conducted in 1982 by the Delaware Department of Transportation and in 1986 by the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research along the planned realignment of Delaware Route 7 around the town of Christiana. Three sites in close proximity to one another, but representing separate occupations, were identified within the limits of the right-of-way (ROW). They are the Patterson Lane Site (7NC-E-53), the William Dickson Site (7NC-E-82), and the Heisler Tenancy Site (7NC-E-83), collectively known as the Patterson Lane Site Complex.

The Patterson Lane Site (7NC-E-53) was the home of John Read, a prominent merchant and father of George Read, one of Delaware's signers of the Declaration of Independence. The site called by the Reads' "The Place at Christeen", was originally occupied in the early-to-mid eighteenth century by that family, and functioned both as a domestic site, and as the location of an active and important wharf, store, and landing throughout the nineteenth century. The archaeological investigations located the presence of a house foundation and intact eighteenth century land surface. This site is considered eligible for inclusion to the National Register under Criterion D, and because recent ROW plans have shifted, the site will be preserved in place.

The William Dickson Site (7NC-E-82) was occupied originally as a store around 1780, and functioned as a shop until about 1845, when it was removed. A second dwelling was erected on the same site and was occupied as a tenant house, at some period by Afro-Americans, until about 1919, when it was demolished. Archaeological testing identified both of the building phases, and the analysis of artifact assemblages yielded significant information regarding commercial properties in Delaware, and data on black lifeways for the second half of the nineteenth century. This site is considered to be eligible for inclusion to the National Register under Criterion D. However, Phase II investigations at 7NC-E-82 constituted data recovery and no further work at the site is recommended.

The Heisler Tenancy Site (7NC-E-83) was the location of a nineteenth century tenant house and lot. The archaeological testing identified the house foundation, well, and a trash midden containing large amounts of historic artifacts. The recovered artifacts allowed comparison of the Heisler site with other local and regional sites, and provided considerable data about rural tenant lifeways in nineteenth century Delaware. Due to the recent demolition of the tenant house in 1968, and the trash midden character of the feature excavated, this site is not considered eligible for inclusion to the National Register and no further work is recommended.